CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Unity between the wearer and garment is crucial for high performance and satisfaction. The unification bridge between wearer and garment is built of design criteria established by assessing the wearer’s needs.

There are many careers in our society in which uniforms are worn. One such career is that of flight attendant. Uniform committees are established to choose flight attendant uniforms as dictated by management standards. Committee members are airline employees from management, flight attendant supervisors and one active flight attendant representative (L. Ricks, flight attendant supervisor, personal communication, February, 17, 1996). According to flight attendant satisfaction responses, this method has not produced a uniform that fulfills the functional needs of the flight attendants.

As a professional airline representative, the flight attendant is expected to maintain a presence of authority and recognition while performing a range of job related duties. The most important responsibility of the flight attendant is maintaining the safety and comfort of passengers. Additional duties may require the flight attendant to act as a security guard, tour director, entertainer, therapist, referee, bartender, baggage handler, and general keeper of the cabin.

A broad based literature review revealed studies of issues surrounding the flight attendant career but no studies related to the flight attendant uniform. Harma, Laitinen, Partinen, & Suvanto (1993) provide studies related to physiological/health profiles of flight attendants. These studies investigated physiological effects of lengthy international round trip flights on the flight attendant.

Studies of illnesses and health surveys were reported by Smolensky, Lee, Mott and Colligan (1982) and Huston (1993). Authors Nutt-Birigwa (1986), and Rhodes (1993) conducted studies related to emergency experiences and their relationship to levels of stress on the flight attendant. Other issues related to flight attendant research included career development and work issues. There were no studies directly related to the flight attendant uniform. However, the literature review revealed a study related to assessed needs of the wearer and uniform preferences for foodservice workers (Workman, 1991) and female collegiate basketball players (Feather, Ford & Herr, 1996). Literature also revealed studies of needs assessment of non-uniform clothing by Boles (1982), Vass (1989), and Mullet (1984). Those studies developed measures and used design frameworks to determine the preferences of the wearers and garment characteristics necessary to design clothing that functioned for the needs of the wearer.

Together, these studies provided the direction and framework, for the development of this study. The unification bridge between the wearer and garment was built of design criteria translated from the preferences of experienced wearers.